

RIDGECREST FIELD OFFICE

FIELD MANAGER'S REPORT: HECTOR A. VILLALOBOS

CALIFORNIA DESERT DISTRICT ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

June – 2010

Lands and Minerals – Renewable Energy – all of the projects below require lots of coordination by staff that will be ongoing. Some of the coordination requirements may involve: California Energy Commission (CEC), Military, Tribes, California Department of Fish and Game (CDF&G), Kern County, and others. The DAC Field Trip will focus on some of the renewable Energy projects proposed near Ridgecrest and Owens Valley.

- **Ridgecrest Solar Power Project** – Ridgecrest Field Office (RIFO) staff is working with the CEC to review data adequacy responses and additional data collected (biological and cultural resources) to update the Plan of Development (POD) and the Application for Certification (AFC) from submissions from Solar Millennium. The CEC and BLM recently released a draft plan amendment/EIS/staff assessment for a 90-day review period that will end July 8, 2010. This is a fast track project; however, Solar Millennium has submitted a schedule change delaying the project until 2011.
- **Terra-Gen Tehachapi Mtns. Wind Turbine Repower Project** – We continue to work with Terra-Gen's POD modifications for construction of new Turbines. Working with them on set back requirements, required Storm water Pollution Prevention Plan, and other permits required by Kern County. Lots of site prep work is being coordinated with our Reality Specialist to ensure compliance with POD and Kern County requirements.
- **Oak Creek Energy, Tehachapi Mtns. Wind Monitoring Project** – We to continue to work with Oak Creek on the installation of met towers. Several met towers have already been installed and several more will be installed. They are already consulting with us on the development of a POD for turbines. Reality Specialist has been conducting compliance checks and coordinating with the proponent and staff.
- **EnXco-Power Partners, Southern Techachapi Mtns. Type II to III Wind Project** – Our Reality Specialist is coordinating with proponent on the transition from a type II application to a type III. We received a Type III Application and POD which we will initiate a staff review.
- **Terra-Gen Techachapi Mtns. Wind Monitoring Project** – Our Realty Specialist is working with proponent on the processing of a Type II application for new met towers on a section of BLM land near other land that already have turbines on the sites. We expect to complete our NEPA reviews within 90 days.
- **Sean Roberts Mojave Wind Monitoring Project** – The RIFO is working with the proponent to process a Type II application for new met towers on BLM land that consists of numerous BLM parcels interspaced with private property in the Mojave area. Both the BLM land and the private land are being monitored. Some private property parcels already have met towers. Coordination is required with Kern County as well as with our staff. We expect to complete the NEPA review within 90 days.

- **Boulevard Associates Northern Tehachapi Mtns. Ridgecrest and Bakersfield Areas** – RIFO staff is working with the proponent to process a Type II application for met towers. The application was amended and additional met tower sites were proposed. The POD was amended and a new EA is being written by the contractor. Expect to receive the new EA for review within the next 90 days.
- **RES America's Little Lake North and South Wind Monitoring Projects (Owens Valley)** – Staff is reviewing data submitted for two proposals in very sensitive areas. Have initiated consultation with Tribes and Military. The Military is reviewing the proposals which may conflict with the Military Mission and low level flight zones. Expect to complete our NEPA reviews within the next 90 days. Native American consultation to date has identified some concerns.
- **Competitive Power Ventures Jawbone ACEC Wind Monitoring Projects** – Staff is reviewing the application and POD and met tower sites to monitor about 40,000 acres within the ACEC. Kern County and the Military have already expressed concerns about the proposed project. We have received biological and cultural resource data from contractors. We expect to complete the NEPA review within 90 days.
- **LADWP's Barren Ridge Renewable Transmission Project** – Staff is reviewing draft sections of the Draft EIS/EIR as generated by the contractor for the next 90 days. Linn Gum is the Project Manager and is coordinating the reviews with staff. Expect a Draft EIS/EIR to be ready by Summer 2010.
- **Haiwee Geothermal Leasing EIS** – Staff is coordinating the review of draft EIS chapters with Linn Gum and staff. Expect to hold public meetings and a Draft EIS Summer 2010.

Lands and Minerals – Temporary Land Use Permits

- **Film Permits** – This is ongoing work for our office. We process on the average one film permit per week. These require a quick review and fast turn-around by staff to issue the permits on very short notice. This FY we have processed about 30 film permits.

Lands and Minerals – Minerals

- **Briggs Gold Mine** (Panamint Mountains) – Staff has received an amendment for the existing Plan of Operations (POO). Within the next 90 days, staff will review the amendment and initiate and probably complete the NEPA process to authorize the work.
- **Gypsum Queen Mining Proposal at Koehn Dry Lake** – The proponent plans to submit a POO and a draft EA for staff review and approval. We expect to review POO and EA within the next 90 days.
- **Geothermal COSO Pipeline Construction Compliance Actions** – The COSO geothermal water pipeline has been constructed. For the next 90 days we will continue to closely monitor the project to ensure compliance with stipulations and conditions of approval.
- **Geothermal and Na/K Leasable Production Verification** – ongoing for the next 90 days. Staff specialists will continue to conduct production inspections of the COSO Operating Co. geothermal field and the Searles Valley Minerals mining operations. Inspections are conducted to ensure production verification for payment of royalties.

Multi-Resources – Support Work – the Multi-Resources staff is providing NEPA, Cultural and natural resources support to the other Field Office Branches including support work for renewable energy and AML Projects. This

work includes reviewing numerous projects, conducting section 106, Native American consultation, and doing biological assessments.

Multi-Resources – WH&Bs

- **Salt Wells Corral Facilities** – We will continue to care and feed approximately 600 horses and 200 burros currently being housed at the corrals. This is a lot of work for the crew and contract workers to ensure animals are being cared for in a humane manner 24/7. The work includes prepping about 300 new arrivals during the next 90 days. While some are arriving, some horses and burros are leaving. So far this FY approximately 700 horses and 200 burros were shipped from Ridgecrest to long term pastures in SD, NE, OK, and KS.
- **Removals** – Within the next 90 days we expect to coordinate and work on removing burros and horses from China Lake, Ft. Irwin, USFO Inyo, and along the Colorado River. So far this FY we have gathered about 200 burros from USFS Big Bear, Chimahuevi, Ft. Irwin, and Goldstone.
- **Adoptions** – Ongoing for the next 90 days. We expect to work on conducting at least four adoption events at Sundance Ranch; and three satellite adoptions at Valley Center, Indio, and Devore. We are also conducting day-to-day adoptions at the corrals. A total of 180 animals have been adopted to date, some from the corrals and others through satellite adoption events.
- **Census and Monitoring HAs/HMAs** – Helicopter census work is planned for the Piper Mountain and Fish Lake Valley areas. We are planning to monitor the Chemehuevi and Chocolate Mtns.
- **Outreach** – We plan to coordinate with public affairs on adoptions, Equine Affaire in Pomona; work with the USMC Mounted Color Guard; and probably participate in Bishop's Mule Days.

Multi-Resources – Range

- **Grazing** – It was a wet winter and we processed numerous sheep grazing authorizations. A few sheep bands were authorized in March with the majority authorized in April. In all, five operators grazed 17 bands, with an average of 800 sheep per band. We had 3 bands in the El Pasos, 4 sheep bands in the Spanglers, 3 bands in Rose Valley, and 7 bands on various checkerboard lands along Highways 395, 14, and 58. As of June 2, all the bands have completed grazing and have been removed.

Multi-Resources – Wildlife

- **T&E** – We have a plate full of consultation work associated with the renewable energy support work for projects such as Solar Millennium's solar proposal and several mining proposals.
- **CCS Project** – during the next 90 days staff plans to initiate the Butterbredt Springs Riparian Project. This area is in need of fencing and restoration of the riparian area. Also will help keep the cows out.

Recreation, Wilderness, and Maintenance

- **SRPs** – On average staff processes on average 2 to 4 SRPs per month. We are in the middle of the heavy use season and are regularly processing SRPs for competitive OHV events, equestrian events, and other group events. To date we have processed about 35 permits this FY; we are processing another 5 SRP.

- **Restoration** – We have completed numerous restoration projects using three SCA teams and many volunteers. The SCA teams completed projects in the Rands, Jawbone-Butterbrecht, and several wilderness areas. They effectively closed at least 200 hundred illegal OHV trails, addressed about 45 wilderness incursion problem areas. The teams did intensive restoration, fence building, and delineated designated trails and campsites. They also monitor previous restoration projects and did maintenance.
- **Maintenance** – We have a small maintenance crew who are assisted by lots of volunteers such as the Friends of Jawbone who are continuing to maintain hundreds of routes and trails in our heavily used limited use areas. They are signing, fencing, barricading, and grading lots of trails. Most of the work is in the Jawbone-Butterbrecht, Rands, and Ridgecrest areas. We estimate that 300 miles of designated trails and roads have been maintained by our volunteers. During Moose Anderson Day, at the Jawbone-Butterbrecht ACEC, volunteers removed tons of trash from the area; they towed out several old car bodies; and mistreated salt cedar invasive plants by removing and treating remains with herbicides.
- **Wilderness Incursions** – Staff and volunteers will continue to monitor certain wilderness areas for compliance and incursions and they will mitigate these by conducting restoration work with the SCA crews and volunteers. Work involves fencing and building rocky barricades. Several projects have been completed.
- **OHV Grants** – Ridgecrest submitted proposals for three OHV grants totaling approximately 1.2 million. The grants are for restoration (\$635,000); ground operations (\$350,000); and Law Enforcement (\$250,000). We expect to receive approval for these grants as adjusted in July.

Hazmat/Abandoned Mine Lands Projects

- **Rand/Red Mountain Hazmat-AML** – The installation of 4 air monitoring stations has been completed. Expect to have initial sampling start this month. The remedial investigation phase of the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) has been completed and the draft RI/FS is expected this month. Two open house meetings are set, one scheduled for January 26th; another is set for May 25th. The Central Hazmat Fund audit team from Washington conducted an audit. A contract is being considered to complete additional remedial work.
- **Ruth and Darwin Mines** – The Corp of Engineers and their contractors were selected for the hazmat clean-up and reclamation, and remediation of numerous physical mine hazards. An agreement is expected to be developed within the next 90 days. At this time only the Ruth Mine is being considered. The Darwin mine is on hold until survey work is completed.
- **Edith E. Mine and Chris Wicht Camp** – Within the next 90 days we expect the California Department of Conservation Abandoned Mines Unit together with the BLM RIFO staff, will start closing and/or covering numerous physical mine hazards located on the mine site. Bat and bird surveys will be completed along with the cultural resource surveys. A contract was completed to remove hazmat and other trash from the Edith E mine and Chris Wicht Camp areas.